U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson Street
Craig, CO 81625-1129

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2009-0094-EA

PROJECT NUMBER: EQ41

PROJECT NAME: Bears Ears Fuel Break

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T9N R100W, Sections 13, 14, 23, 24; T9N R99W, Section 19

APPLICANT: Bureau of Land Management

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action and Alternatives are subject to the following plans:

Name of Plan: Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision

Date Approved: April 26, 1989,

Name of Plan: Northwest Colorado Fire Management Program Fire Management Plan

Date Approved: Approved annually since 2000

Results: Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision: The treatment area falls within Management Unit 3: Little Snake River. The management objectives for this unit, as outlined in the Little Snake Resource Management Plan, are improve soil and watershed values, increase forage production, and enhance livestock grazing. The development of other resource uses/values within this unit is allowed consistent with the management objectives for livestock grazing, forage production, soil, and watershed resource objectives. The proposed action has been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3). The proposed alternatives are in conformance with the objectives of the Little Snake Resource Management Plan.

Northwest Colorado Fire Management Program Fire Management Plan: A portion of the proposed action falls within a C-15 polygon, Dry Mountain/Bears. The vegetation description, as identified in the Fire Management Plan, of this polygon is pinyon-juniper with sagebrush stands

in the draws. The resource management objective of the Fire Management Plan for this fire polygon is to avoid large, stand replacement fires to reduce the probability of large scale erosion and cheatgrass invasion. In this polygon, limited suppression strategy may be optimal in some areas for fire fighter safety concerns due to heavy fuel loadings and steep slopes.

A portion of the proposed action falls within a D-1 polygon, W. Little Snake and Disappointment. The vegetation description, as identified in the Fire Management Plan, of this polygon is described as supporting a mix of pinyon-juniper, sagebrush and mountain shrub. The resource management objective of the Fire Management Plan for this fire polygon is to encourage fire to promote mosaic age classes in all plant communities.

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION: In accordance with the National Fire Plan of 1999, public land agencies are directed to take actions to reduce hazardous fuels, especially in those areas where communities and human development are at risk from wildfire. The Little Snake Fire Management Plan identifies areas where fuels reduction treatments are desired and needed. The proposed fuel break would run along a dividing line between two fire management polygons with varying fire management objectives and suppression constraints. The resource management objective of the unit to the north of the proposed fuel break (D-1 Fire Polygon) is to encourage fire to promote mosaic age classes in plant communities, whereas the resource management objective of the unit to the south of the proposed fuel break (C-15 Fire Polygon) is to avoid large, stand replacement fires to reduce the probability of large scale erosion and cheatgrass invasion. The implementation of this proposed fuel break would improve wildfire protection for cultural resources found throughout the area and provide more opportunities to allow future fires to burn for resource benefit.

PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS: The project is listed on the NEPA log on the Little Snake Field Office website.

BACKGROUND: The proposed fuel break is located in an area with a high density of old aged (approx.100-200 years old) pinyon and juniper trees. The area is thought to have a high occurrence of cultural artifacts, especially "wickiups" (a domed single-room dwelling used by certain Native American tribes). In the D-1 polygon portion of the treatment area, fire is encouraged to promote mosaic age classes in plant communities. In recent years, Fire Management has been unable to utilize this fire management strategy due to the risk to cultural artifacts. Implementation of this fuel break will provide protection for these artifacts as well as enable Fire Management to utilize fire as a management tool.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Treat approximately 50 acres mechanically for hazardous fuel reduction purposes. The project would involve thinning 50 acres of old aged (approx. 100-200 years old) pinyon and juniper trees. This treatment would provide a fuel break along an existing two-track road. The fuel break is strategically placed in an area that would help to facilitate prescribed burning in the D-1

fire polygon. The preferred method utilizes a large rubber tired tractor (similar to a skidder) with a 6' – 8' mulching head to shred and mulch trees up to 20" diameter. It generally leaves small branches and wood chunks from pencil size up to bowling ball size. The mulch is fairly evenly scattered across the surface and stumps would be ground down to a height of 6" or less.

Project activities will not be permitted during the months of May 15 through July 15 to prevent disturbance to nesting migratory birds.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE: Under this alternative, hazardous fuel reduction activities would not occur.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES/MITIGATION MEASURES

CRITICAL RESOURCES

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: Air quality in the vicinity of the project area is considered to be in compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. There are six Class 1 (visibility) areas within 100 km of the resource area, two of which are in northwest Colorado (Mt. Zirkel Wilderness and Flat Tops Wilderness). There are no federal Class 1 areas in Utah or Wyoming within 100 km of the resource area.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Mechanical treatments proposed would not be expected to affect air quality other than localized short term dust production. Prescribed and wildland fires can contribute substantial emissions of air quality pollutants including particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, and carbon monoxide. Prescribed and wildland fires also reduce visibility and contribute to regional haze. Prescribed fires are typically smaller than uncontrolled wildfires occurring during peak burning conditions. Prescribed fires involve less combustion and less total smoke emissions, since they are typically conducted under conditions when larger fuels (>3" diameter) are not consumed. Prescribed fires are also conducted under atmospheric conditions that would promote air pollutant dispersion. Each prescribed fire must be continually monitored to assure that the burning conditions remain within a previously determined prescription of controlled fire and smoke behavior. Although some impacts to regional air quality would be expected for a very short duration from implementing this project it is generally recognized that overall, impacts would be reduced in the long term by reducing the potential of having an uncontrolled wildfire.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: The direct environmental consequences associated with fuels reduction activities will be absent in the no action alternative. However, in the long term it would be possible to have a substantially greater air quality impairment episode as a result of increasing the potential for large scale wildfires. Wildfires tend to produce more smoke as a result of more fuel consumption, their larger size, and longer burning duration. A large fire in this area has the potential to impact air quality and reduce visibility within the two

Class 1 areas in northwest Colorado.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 08/10/09

AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Affected Environment: Not Present

Environmental Consequences: Not Applicable

Mitigative Measures: Not Applicable

Name of specialist and date: Gina Robison, 08/06/09

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: Cultural resources, in this region of Colorado, range from late Paleo-Indian to Historic. For a general understanding of the cultural resources in this area of Colorado, see *An Overview of Prehistoric Cultural Resources, Little Snake Resource Area, Northwestern Colorado,* Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resources Series, Number 20, *An Isolated Empire, A History of Northwestern Colorado,* Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resource Series, Number 2 and *Colorado Prehistory: A Context for the Northern Colorado River Basin*, Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists.

Environmental Consequences: The proposed project, Bears Ears Fuel Break, has not undergone a Class III cultural resource survey. The project area will be defined and a Class III survey will occur prior to the project beginning construction. Once the area is surveyed, the COR will be notified as to any mitigation that must occur prior to the project beginning. The following standard mitigative measures (Discovery Stipulation) will be required regardless of the results of the Class III cultural resources survey.

Mitigative Measures:
The following standard stipulations apply for this project:
1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are encountered or uncovered during any project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate vicinity of the find and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO) at (970) 826-5000. Within five working days, the AO will inform the operator as to:

- Whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;

- The mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the identified area can be used for project activities again; and
- Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) (Federal Register Notice, Monday, December 4, 1995, Vol. 60, No. 232) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone at (970) 826-5000, and with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

2. If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation costs. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

Name of specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris, 08/17/09

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located in an area of isolated dwellings. Oil and gas development and ranching are the primary economic activities.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: The project area is relatively isolated from population centers, so no populations would be affected by physical or socioeconomic impacts of either alternative. Neither alternative would directly affect the social, cultural or economic well-being and health of Native American, minority or low-income populations.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Louise McMinn, 08/10/09

FLOOD PLAINS

Affected Environment: There are no large floodplain areas in the proposed project location. The fuel break treatment is located in headwater stream segments.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 08/10/09

INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: The whole project area is susceptible to the introduction and establishment of noxious and invasive weeds. Downy brome (cheatgrass) is common along roads and on disturbed areas in the vicinity of the project. Other species of noxious weeds are not known to be a problem in this area, but can always be introduced by vehicle traffic and wildlife. New weed infestations can occur from vehicles carrying seed from other areas. The BLM is in cooperation with Moffat County Cooperative Weed Management program to locate and control weeds on public lands. All principals of Integrated Pest Management are employed to control noxious weeds on public lands.

Environmental Consequences: The threat of weed infestation following mechanical treatments is relatively low because little soil disturbance occurs, adequate desirable vegetation exists in the understory, and livestock grazing rest is stipulated.

Mitigation Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Gail Martinez, 08/19/09

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The pinyon jay and juniper titmouse may nest in the pinyon juniper woodlands associated with this proposed project. Both bird species are listed on the USFWS 2008 Birds of Conservation Concern List. There are no known raptor nests in the project area.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Since project activities would not be permitted during the nesting period (May 15 through July 15), there would be little chance of take of either species to occur. Individual birds would likely be displaced from the area during project implementation due to noise and an increase in human presence. This mechanical treatment is intended to create a fire break to prevent large catastrophic fires that could remove habitats from a large area.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: There would be no chance of take from the No Action Alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 08/17/09

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

A letter was sent to the Eastern Shoshone, Uinta and Ouray Tribal Council, Southern Ute Tribal Council, Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Council on May 26, 2009. The letter listed the FY2010 projects that the BLM would notify them on and projects that would not require notification. A follow-up phone call was performed on July 26, 2009. No comments were received (Letter on file at the Little Snake Field Office). This project requires no additional notification.

Name of specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris, 08/17/09

PRIME & UNIQUE FARMLANDS

Affected Environment: No Prime and/or Unique Farmlands are present in the vicinity of the proposed project.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 08/10/09

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED ANIMAL SPECIES

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered species or habitats for such species within or near the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 8/12/09

T&E AND SENSITIVE PLANTS

Affected Environment: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species within or in the vicinity of the proposed fuelbreak.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim, 08/04/09

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: If a release does occur, the environment affected would be dependent on the nature and volume of material released. If there are no releases, there would be no impact on the environment.

Environmental Consequences: Consequences would be dependent on the volume and nature of the material released. In most every situation involving hazardous materials, there are ways to

remediate the area that has been contaminated. Short-term consequences would occur, but they can be remedied, and long-term impacts would be minimal.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Gail Martinez, 08/17/09

WATER QUALITY - GROUND

Affected Environment: The geology of the area affected by the Proposed Action suggests that there is potential for ground water aquifers. The ground water quality in the area ranges from useable to poor.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The mechanical treatment by rubber tired vehicles will have no adverse impacts on the groundwater.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: There would be no impact if the mechanical treatment did not occur.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Jennifer Maiolo, 8/10/09

WATER QUALITY - SURFACE

Affected Environment: The proposed project area is located southwest of Sand Wash Basin where surface runoff would drain either to the northeast into tributaries of Sand Wash (a tributary to the Little Snake River) or southwest into Lefthand and Marshall Draws, then to West Boone Draw (a tributary to Vermillion Creek).

Water quality of the main stem of the Little Snake River (from its confluence with Powder Wash to the confluence with the Yampa River) must support the beneficial uses of Aquatic Life Warm 2, Recreation E, and Agriculture. Water quality of the main stem of Vermillion Creek (from Highway 318 to the confluence with the Green River) must support the same beneficial uses.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Minimal surface disturbance would occur with the proposed mechanical treatments. Little to no effect to water quality would be expected to result from implementing the mechanical fuel reduction treatments. In the long term analysis, the proposed action would have a positive impact to water quality. This would be because of the decreased potential of experiencing a large scale wildfire and the expected increase in plant diversity and ground cover, resulting from the planned treatments.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: No direct effects on water quality are

anticipated from selecting the No Action Alternative. Indirect negative effects could result in the short or long term period following no action if a large wildfire occurred in the area. In this event, substantially more sediment and nutrient loading of runoff waters would likely occur and it would be derived from a larger area of the landscape.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 08/10/09

WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES

Affected Environment: No riparian areas, wetlands or springs have been documented within the project area.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 08/10/09

WILD & SCENIC RIVERS

Affected Environment: Not Present

Environmental Consequences: Not Applicable

Mitigative Measures: Not Applicable

Name of specialist and date: Gina Robison, 08/06/09

WSAs, WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

Affected Environment: Not Present

Environmental Consequences: Not Applicable

Mitigative Measures: Not Applicable

Name of specialist and date: Gina Robison, 08/06/09

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

FORESTRY

Affected Environment: The area is predominately older growth juniper woodland. Trees range in age from approximately 150 years old to 250+ years old. Tree density is approximately 100 – 200 stems/acre. This is not an important area for wood products due to the remote location, although some isolated firewood cutting does occur.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The proposed action would involve the removal (mastication) of 50% to 80% of the trees over a 50 acre strip. Since this is a thinning, the area would still have a forested appearance. The resulting mulch produced from tree mastication would have an inhibiting affect on seedling establishment until partially decomposed. The proposed action would have little to no affect on firewood availability in the area.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: The site has reached its climax stage of old growth juniper and would remain in this state for many years or until some disturbance causes widespread tree mortality.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Dale Beckerman, 8/20/09

RANGE MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The Proposed Action lies within the West Boone Draw Allotment (#04304). This allotment is permitted to Sombrero Ranches for domestic horse use from 12/01 through 5/15.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: There should not be any short term impacts to the grazing operation as a result of the Proposed Action as it is not proposed to close the treatment area to grazing.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: If the Proposed Action is not selected, there is the potential for a large, stand replacement type fire to occur. A large wildfire could potentially close the allotment to livestock grazing from 2 to 5 years.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 08/05/09

SOILS

Affected Environment: The soils present in the area of the Proposed Action are a Grieves-Crestman complex consisting of 10 to 40% slopes. The Grieves soil typical of the Grieves-Crestman complex is deep (> 60 inch rooting depth), it has a medium water holding capacity, and exhibits moderate runoff. The Crestman soil supports the plant community representative of the

Sandy Juniper Range Site found on the ridge tops and slopes. It is a shallow soil (10 to 20 inches to bedrock) which has a very low water holding capacity and exhibits very high runoff. Both soils are non-saline and non-sodic.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Any vegetation management activity that causes mechanical soil disturbance can have negative impacts to soil productivity, nutrient cycling, and soil cover and vegetation recovery. This is a common occurrence anytime the soil is disturbed. There is a risk of compaction from the heavy equipment used to create the fuelbreak which could increase surface flows and erosion but with proper cover limits being maintained and fuel break construction and maintenance methods that leave some overstory canopy and minimize exposure of bare ground, these effects would be minimized. Effects would also be minimized if the treatment is only preformed when the ground is dry, thereby minimizing ruts and new overland flow patterns.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, the fuelbreak would not be constructed and there would be no further impacts to the soil resource; however, a possible future consequence of the No Action Alternative includes a large, stand replacement wildland fire would could lead to large scale erosion and invasion by non-native species.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 08/05/09

UPLAND VEGETATION

Affected Environment: Two ecological sites occur in the area of the Proposed Action; Sand Foothills and Sandy Juniper. The Sandy Foothills site typically supports native vegetation consisting of antelope bitterbrush, bluebunch wheatgrass, Indian ricegrass, Wyoming big sagebrush, bottlebrush squirreltail and needleandthread. The Sandy Juniper site typically supports native vegetation consisting of twoneedle pinyon, Utah juniper, Wyoming big sagebrush, streambank wheatgrass, antelope bitterbrush, needleleaf sedge, Indian ricegrass, Truckee rabbitbrush, bluebunch wheatgrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, needleandthread, prairie Junegrass and western wheatgrass.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The construction of the proposed fuel break would likely disturb the vegetation that comprises the understory. This disturbance would consist of crushing the vegetation through the operation of the machinery. The disturbance would be temporary in nature and the understory vegetation would be expected to recover over time. The juniper and pinyon pine comprising the overstory would be completely removed along the fuelbreak. This is the objective of the Proposed Action. Over time, it is anticipated that pinyon pine and juniper seedlings would re-establish along the fuelbreak, unless future maintenance of the fuelbreak prevents this re-establishment.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: The fuelbreak would not be constructed; therefore there would be no removal or disturbance of upland vegetation. Possible future consequences of the No Action Alternative include large scale wildland fires that would completely remove all vegetation, which could lead to large scale erosion and invasion by non-native species.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 08/05/09

AQUATIC WILDLIFE

Affected Environment: There is no habitat for aquatic wildlife species in the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 08/12/09

TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE

Affected Environment: The proposed project area provides year round habitat for mule deer and elk. Both mule deer and elk may avoid using the area during the hardest winters when snow depths prevent use. A variety of small mammals, song birds and reptiles may also be found within the project area at various times of the year.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The proposed mechanical treatment would treat approximately 50 acres of pinyon juniper habitat in a linear fashion. The Proposed Action would likely displace most wildlife species during the actual treatment. Once the treatment is completed, it is expected that displaced wildlife would return to the project area. This mechanical treatment would not have a negative impact on overall habitat quality of the project area. This treatment is designed to prevent large catastrophic fires from occurring that could result in the loss of large acres of habitat. Overall, this project would maintain healthy and productive habitats for a variety of wildlife species.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative would have no impact to wildlife habitat.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 08/17/09

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, those brought forward for analysis will be formatted as shown above.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Fluid Minerals		JAM 8/10/09	
Forest Management			DRB 8/20/09
Hydrology/Ground			See Water Quality, Ground
Hydrology/Surface			See Water Quality, Surface
Paleontology		JAM 8/10/09	
Range Management		KLM 08/05/09	
Realty Authorizations	LM 8/10/09		
Recreation/Travel Mgmt		GMR 8/6/09	
Socio-Economics		LM 8/10/09	
Solid Minerals		JAM 8/10/09	
Visual Resources		GMR 8/6/09	
Wild Horse & Burro Mgmt	KLM 08/05/09		

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: The Bears Ears area of Sand Wash Basin is an area rich with archeological significance. It is utilized by people for hunting, camping, off-road vehicle recreation, antler "hunting" and livestock grazing. Numerous maintained and unmaintained roads exist throughout the area. These roads are used regularly by ranchers as well by as the primary recreation users in the area, hunters and off-road vehicle enthusiasts. The primary cumulative impacts from these activities are most immediately seen in the presence of roads, recreational trails, and weed presence. The Proposed Action to create a fuel break in this area is compatible with other uses, both historic and present, and would not add any new or detrimental impacts to those already present.

STANDARDS

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (animal) STANDARD:

The proposed project area provides healthy productive habitats for a variety of wildlife species. The proposed fuel break would likely displace wildlife species from the project area during implementation. This would be a short term disturbance that would not impact any species populations. The fuel break could prevent wild fires from becoming large fires that remove lots of habitat. This standard is currently being met and would continue to be met in the future.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 8/17/09

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (animal) STANDARD:

There are no threatened, endangered or special status species present within the proposed project area. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 8/12/09

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (plant) STANDARD:

Proposed Action: This standard is met under both the Proposed Action and No Action Alternatives. The Proposed Action would have minimal direct impacts on the plant community. Plant disturbance from the equipment used to create the fuelbreak would be localized and minimal in the larger plant community. The project would decrease the chance of a large, stand conversion type wildfire which, if a fire were to occur, would have negative impacts to the native plant community.

The No Action Alternative would also meet this standard because no surface disturbance would occur. The benefits of reduced fire danger would not be realized, but this would not necessarily preclude this standard from being met.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 08/05/09

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (plant) STANDARD: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species within or in the vicinity of the proposed fuelbreak. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim, 6/4/09

RIPARIAN SYSTEMS STANDARD:

There are no wetlands or riparian systems within the proposed project area. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 8/12/09

WATER QUALITY STANDARD:

Proposed Action: The water quality standard is met with selection of either of the alternatives. All stream segments are supporting the classified uses and no stream segments are considered to be impaired. No increase in sediments and nutrients are anticipated that would result in runoff waters from the project area. The project as proposed would enhance the management of this landscape for

wildfires and reduce the continuity of fuels. Fire use and fuel management are considered to be Best Management Practices which would help to incrementally reduce the heavy fuel loading in sagebrush and pinyon-juniper woodlands, limiting the scale and intensity of a future unplanned wildfire and subsequent water quality degradation.

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 8/1009

UPLAND SOILS STANDARD:

Proposed Action: The upland soils standard is met under either alternative. The soil disturbance that would occur along the fuelbreak would be short-term and somewhat confined. Natural revegetation of the fuelbreak is expected to occur over time if the fuelbreak is not maintained. The forage resource is sufficient to provide the needed cover for upland soils. Upland soils would continue to have diverse plant communities for upland soil health.

The No Action Alternative would also continue to meet the upland soils standard; however, the possibility for a large, stand conversion type fire is greater under this alternative. Wildland fires would destroy the native vegetation and could allow cheatgrass and other annual weeds to invade. Increased erosion of the upland soil resource would occur in these areas over time as the conversion to plants that are less capable of protecting soils proceeds. Eventually upland soil health could be diminished over large areas within the West Boone Draw Allotment.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 08/05/09

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED: Uintah and Ouray Tribal Council, Colorado Native American Commission, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office.

ATTACHMENTS: See attached map.

SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:

DATE SIGNED:

SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWER:

DATE SIGNED:

Finding of No Significant Impact

The environmental assessment, analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action, has been reviewed. With the implementation of the attached mitigation measures there is a finding of no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

1. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts have been disclosed in the EA. Analysis indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests or the locality. The physical and biological effects are limited to the Little Snake Resource Area and adjacent land.

2. Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials.

3. There would be no adverse impacts to regional or local air quality, prime or unique farmlands, known paleontological resources on public land within the area, wetlands, floodplain, areas with unique characteristics, ecologically critical areas or designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

4. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment.

5. There are no effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Sufficient information on risk is available based on information in the EA and other past actions of a similar nature.

6. This alternative does not set a precedent for other actions that may be implemented in the future to meet the goals and objectives of adopted Federal, State or local natural resource related plans, policies or programs.

7. No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant adverse impact were identified or are anticipated.

8. Based on previous and ongoing cultural surveys, and through mitigation by avoidance, no adverse impacts to cultural resources were identified or anticipated. There are no known American Indian religious concerns or persons or groups who might be disproportionately and adversely affected as anticipated by the Environmental Justice Policy.

9. No adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat that was determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act were identified. If, at a future time, there could be the potential for adverse impacts, treatments would be modified or mitigated not to have an adverse effect or new analysis would be conducted.

10. This alternative is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements for the protection of the environment.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

DATE SIGNED:

Bears Ears Fuel Break

T9NR100W Sections: 13, 14, 23, 24
T9NR99W Section: 19